

More Grace by Rick Watson

*Old Hebrew prophet reeking in rags,
Ancient Hopi medicine dancer,
Thresher dancing Tom McGrath,
My teachers and old companions,
Where are you now: really—now?*

*The robin perches on the silver painted
Ball diamond backstop at 8:45
After the school bell rings
It is the Grammar of Grace*

*And yet, more grace—
Over Southwest,
A mile across the valley,
A Homer rosé fingered light
Pushes some flower petal shades
Across the buildings
(White)
And Prairie
(Shadowed black, then yellow)
Under the mass of clouds
(Or smoke from a gasification plant)
Over the sky dome of town*

*I look up from this book of yours
And see the Canadian Cherry
Below the windows
Yes, it finally buds, pale green wing!
There is ice left over from the rain
It shines on the boards of the balcony*

*You say to your wife,
(I am back inside
the living word of your book)
“What do we have to lose?
And who knows the gain?*”
Fate, the slope of loss, abides,
But grace is bigger,
“...and yet more grace.”**

*It is all in the —in—the of—and the
Noun who names us,
The who does what?
Oh, us foolish Galatians!*

*The inexhaustible grammar of grace--
The refrain plays on when
Written plays of word fall apart: still
The telescope eye is lost in the
Impossible vacuum of stars
But even the atoms still hear the tune*

**Larry Woiwode, What I Think I Did*

The Beginnings of Grief by Rick Watson

*The Action
(After Larry Woiwode's title)*

*What
I Am,
I am going
To do;
I think
What
I am going
To do.
What I think
I am
Going to do;
I think*

*Now is the time to say
Something, a little Des-car-tease
But there is nothing to say, I think
There fore one sentence of his,
I am sure,
Ruined and razed
The brain for too many years*

*Here's one thing:
Good old Schwartz
The zen Buddha boy
Walking the late
December streets
Drunk in his black beret:
--I stink; there...fore!!! I Am--
(Dec. 31, 1970; 4-8/07)*

Charles Neumiller, a main Character in Beyond the Bedroom Wall and Born Brothers, soon to be classic novels about identity, family and faith, finds himself on a hay bale in a winter field and lets a Bible fall open—his eyes land on these words from the Apostle Paul, a prototype Christian individualist if there ever was one: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will.”

I don't know what that means, but something deeper in me sees it by genetic sense. I don't know what Larry Woiwode wants it to mean—I doubt it should be explained; otherwise, why put it in a narrative we call a novel. Charles, the character in the story thinks this: “...and then the image of my dreams returns to me: traveling at the speed of light yet stilled in glory.”